

continent put me out of touch with the Times, but I read most of them and treasured every one. Baker's columns were the center of my life as a reader of newspapers, and it is exceedingly difficult to imagine what that life will be without them.

Thirty-six years! Has any American newspaper columnist maintained so high a standard of wit, literacy and intelligence for so long a time? Only two come to mind: H.L. Mencken and Walter Lippmann. But Mencken's columns for the Baltimore Evening Sun were on-and-off affairs, and Lippmann struggled through a long dry period during the 1950s before being brought back to life in the 1960s by the debate over the Vietnam War. Baker, by contrast, was, like that other exemplary Baltimorean Cal Ripken Jr., as consistent and reliable as he was brilliant. For all those years he was my idea of what a journalist should be, and I strived—with precious little success—to live up to this example.

Not that I tried to imitate him, or not that I was aware of doing so. One of the many remarkable things about Baker is that, unlike Mencken or Lippmann—or Baker's old boss, James Reston, or Dorothy Thompson, or Drew Pearson, or Dave Barry—he really has no imitators. Other journalists may envy what he did, but in a business where imitation is the sincerest form of self-promotion, Baker broke his own mold. He was, simply and utterly, *sui generis*.

This made him, in the cozy and self-congratulatory world of journalists, odd man out. His colleagues and competitors may have admired and respected him, but few understood him. While they chased around after ephemeral scoops and basked in the reflected glory of the famous and powerful, Baker wrote what he once called “a casual column without anything urgent to tell humanity,” about aspects of life that journalists commonly regard as beneath what they fancy to be their dignity. Looking back to the column's beginnings, Baker once wrote:

“At the Times in those days the world was pretty much confined to Washington news, national news and foreign news. Being ruled off those turfs seemed to leave nothing very vital to write about, and I started calling myself the Times' nothing columnist.” I didn't realize at first that it was a wonderful opportunity to do a star turn. Freed from the duty to dilate on the global predicament of the day, I could build a grateful audience among readers desperate for relief from the Times' famous gravity.”

That is precisely what he did. As he noticed in his valedictory column, Baker's years as a gumshoe reporter immunized him from “columnists' tendency to spend their time with life's winners and to lead lives of isolation from the less dazzling American realities.” Instead of writing self-important thumb-suckers—“The Coming Global Malaise,” “Nixon's Southern Strategy,” “Whith-

er Cyprus?”—he concentrated on ordinary life as lived by ordinary middle-class Americans in the second half of the 20th century. He wrote about shopping at the supermarket, about car breakdowns and mechanics who failed to remedy them, about television and what it told us about ourselves, about children growing up and parents growing older.

Quite surely it is because Baker insisted on writing about all this stuff that failed to meet conventional definitions of “news” that not until 1979 did his fellow journalists get around to giving him the Pulitzer Prize for commentary. Probably, too, it is because he insisted on being amused by the passing scene and writing about in an amusing way. He was only occasionally laugh-out-loud amusing in the manner of Dave Barry—who is now, with Baker's retirement, the one genuinely funny writer in American newspapers—but he was always witty and wry, and he possessed a quality of which I am in awe: an ability to ingratiate himself with readers while at the same time making the most mordant judgments on their society and culture.

There were times in the late years of his column when mordancy seemed to hover at the edge of bitterness. This struck me as inexplicable, but the inner life of another person is forever a mystery, and in any event there is much in *fin de siècle* America about which to be bitter. But mostly Baker dealt in his stock in trade: common-sensical wisdom, wry skepticism, transparent decency. He wasn't just the best newspaper writer around, he was one of the best *writers* around. Period.●

MORTENSEN WINS NATIONAL FINALS RODEO

● Mr. BURNS. Mr. President, I rise today to bring your attention to Dan Mortensen's fifth National Finals Rodeo Championship. Dan Mortensen hails from Manhattan, a small Montana town just off Interstate 90 near the headwaters of the Missouri River. He made the decision to ride saddle broncs on the pro rodeo circuit—and Montana is proud that he did.

In a year when Montana's agriculture community saw many defeats, we thank Dan for inspiring us. He gave us a great show and a championship to boot. We were there with him for his ten white knuckled rides. However, we had stationary seats while he had the notorious saddle bronc horse of the year, Skoal's Wild Card, trying to buck him off in a breaking 88 point ride in the final round. The 88 point ride earned Mortenson one more National Finals Rodeo Championship.

In winning his fifth world saddle bronc title, Dan is working toward a record established by the famous Casey Tibbs for consecutive world titles; a record established in the early days of professional rodeo in America.

I would like to personally thank Mortensen for entertaining us with his breathtaking rides and wish him the best of luck in upcoming rodeos. He is truly an inspiration to competitors in any sport.●

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader is recognized.

ORDERS FOR TUESDAY, JANUARY 12, AND WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 13, 1999

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that when the Senate completes its business today, it stand in adjournment until the hour of 12 noon on Tuesday, January 12, for a pro forma session only. I further ask that the Senate then stand adjourned to reconvene at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, January 13, to consider the articles of impeachment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROGRAM

Mr. LOTT. For the information of all Senators, the Senate will convene on Tuesday, January 12, for a pro forma session only. We will reconvene on Wednesday at 1 p.m. to consider the articles of impeachment. Rollcall votes on motions are possible if any were filed.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL TUESDAY, JANUARY 12, 1999

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I now ask unanimous consent that the Senate stand in adjournment under the previous order.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 4:46 p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, January 12, 1999, at 12 noon.